

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

## **Giles C. Cooke**

August 22, 1819 – August 27, 1890

Old Red Church Cemetery, Tivoli

*One of four obelisks with slabs in front of them, near Rt 9 fence, north side of church*

Gile's Cooke's father Palmer Cook was born December 24, 1787, to Isaiah Cook and Mary Palmer. His mother was Mary "Polly" Halsey, daughter of Jeremiah Halsey and Esther Park. Both of his parents were both born in Preston, CT, but were recorded in the census living in Red Hook as early as 1820.

In 1813 Palmer Cooke purchased land and a mill in Madalin from a Mr. Platner, converting it to a woolen mill a year later. The mill was located on what is now Stonybrook Road. It was taken over by his sons and sold out of the family after Giles died in 1890.

In 1860 the non-population schedule of the federal census gives us a picture of what the mill was like. That year it was recorded that Palmer Cooke had a mill factory that was powered by water and had three looms, three card machines, and 150 spindles. The factory employed four men who produced 1,250 yards of flannel, 1,000 yards of cassinette (cotton warp, woolen weft), 750 yards of satinette (cotton with satin finish) and another 750 yards of plain cloth. The worth of all of this product was over \$3,000, and he had invested \$5,700 in the business.

Palmer was also involved in his community, being one of the people who helped to organize the first Episcopal Church in Red Hook.

Palmer and Polly had four children: Esther P. (1812–1904, married Dr. John H. Cole), Mary P. (1814–1886, married Benjamin H. O'Neil), Giles C. (1819–1890), and Jeremiah H. ("Halsey" 1824–1872).

Neither Giles nor Halsey ever married, and they resided and worked with their parents. They both played the organ at St. Paul's in Tivoli. Giles was involved with the Red Church as well. Polly died in 1862, and in March of 1872, Giles lost his father on the 1st and his brother Halsey on the 8th and suddenly found himself alone and responsible for everything. It must have been a very difficult time for him.

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Giles had several occupations throughout his life: surveyor, teacher, lecturer, manufacturer, inventor, and farmer. He was remembered as having many friends and “his frequent and good poetical contributions” to the *Poughkeepsie Eagle* newspaper which published his poems and prose, though none of it is available online as of this writing. The selection “The Old Grave-Yard” included here is the first one he contributed to the *Red Hook Journal*.

Per his obituary in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* of August 30, 1890, Giles Cooke “...was a staunch friend of the slave at a time when it was not popular to be an abolitionist. His wit and humor, and his skill as a story teller, made him the life of the company. In his friendships he was firm and steadfast.” He died of heart disease in Tivoli on Wednesday, August 27, days after his 71st birthday.

## THE OLD GRAVE-YARD

By G. Cooke

On eastern hill the graveyard shows,  
Against the clear blue of the sky,  
Where gathered to their last repose,  
In narrow homes the dead doth lie.

The winds of heaven their requiem sing,  
With the tall pines that skirt their graves,  
And all the various seasons bring,  
Their garniture, with home to save.

How oft, how oft a funeral train,  
Comes to this still and silent ground,  
Bearing on in grief and pain,  
Some loved one in this sleep profound.

Each ancient leaning mossy stone,  
Affection reared yet marks the spot,  
Where in past years was buried one  
By present race unknown forgot.

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Or there new marbles white and fair,  
O'er the late dead their vigils keep,  
And all in the deepest mourning where  
Bereaved ones yet come and weep.

The dearest friends I've known on earth,  
Are there beneath the mounded sod,  
None more than I could known their worth,  
Who now are resting safe with God.

The years that take me from their death,  
But nearer bring to their abode,  
Each beating pulse and fleeting breath,  
Fore-shortens but the shortening road.

The hour will strike that strikes for all,  
The church bell's deep and solemn sound,  
The shroud, the hearse, the bier, the pall,  
And then the grave's infalling ground.

The grave-yard this new meaning takes,  
Ah life is but a fleeting breath,  
And all our wandering footsteps make,  
But progress to the land of death.

Madalin, N.Y. 1878

*Red Hook Journal*, Friday, March 15, 1878